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BUFFALO, N.Y.

U.S.A.

MANUFACTURERS OF THE

BIRGE VELOURS

THE COURIER LITH CO. BUFFALO N.Y.

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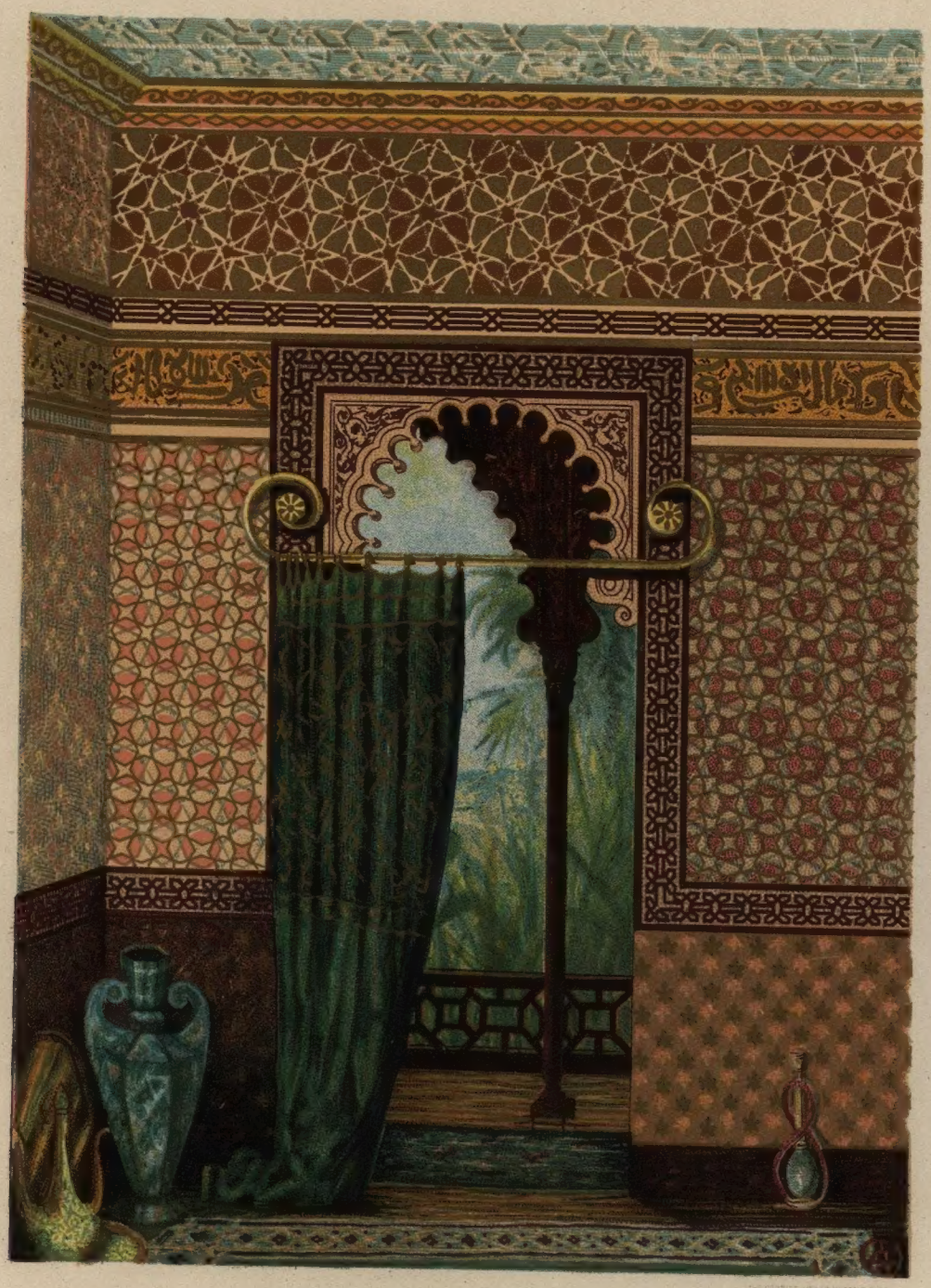
DECORATIONS DESIGNED & MANUFACTURED BY

M. H. BIRGE & SONS BUFFALO, N. Y.



MOORISH ROOM. DECORATED WITH THE BIRGE VELOURS.

PATTERNS FROM THE ORNAMENT OF THE ALHAMBRA PALACE.

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M. H. BIRGE...

INTERIOR AND CEILING DECORATION.

DESIGNS FROM THE ALHAMBRA.

THE PALACE OF THE ALHAMBRA, at Granada, Spain, is a rich treasure-house of decorative art, as well as a monument of surpassing historical interest. It marks the highest reach of that wave of Arab invasion, which at one time threatened to overflow Europe, and bring the civilized world under the standard of Mohammed. The Arabs, or Moors, as they were generally called in Europe, invaded Spain A. D. 711, and were not driven from Granada, their last stronghold in that country, until 1492. The building of the Alhambra (splendid memorial of their sojourn in the west) was begun by the monarch Ibnu-l-Ahmar, or Alhamar, as the name is sometimes written, in 1248, and was completed under his successors about 1314. It is beyond comparison the grandest existing example of Arabic art, and, even after more than five centuries of vandalism and neglect, remains an unique mine of that exquisite style of ornamentation known as "Arabesque."

APPRECIATING the growing taste for Oriental ideas in decoration, and feeling that the peculiar art of the Alhambra ornament could easily be adapted to modern uses, we have made fac-simile copies of the patterns employed in the decoration of this beautiful palace. While we have necessarily reduced the drawings in scale, we have endeavored, in color and style, to preserve the original beauty and grace of line for which they are remarkable. Our collection from this source consists of twenty-one patterns of papers and borders, a few of which we have shown in Plate No. 1, as suggestive of their combination and arrangement. The variety of effect producible with these materials will be found, on examination, very remarkable. It includes on the one hand designs available in decoration of the most striking and sumptuous character, while others lend themselves, with equal ease, to the simplest and quietest taste in domestic interiors. In all alike will be perceived a distinctive meaning and character only to be met in works of genuine art. They contain hardly a commonplace tint or line. "A fit dwelling for the immortal gods!" was the exclamation of Peter Martyr, as he entered the Alhambra in the train of its Gothic conquerors. On one of the interior walls an Arab poet had composed this inscription: "Look attentively at my elegance, and thou wilt reap the benefit of a *commentary on decoration.*" The Moorish artist was indeed, in a sense, shut up by religious restrictions to the decorative in art, a fact which at least partly explains the excellence of his work in the Alhambra palace.

> "The strict rules of the Koran," writes J. Hayter Lewis, former Professor of Architecture in the London University, "forbade the copying of any natural objects. That this rule was not always followed may be seen in the Alhambra; but it, nevertheless, was in general attended to, and wonderfully beautiful were the results of this absence of all copying. Intricate scroll-work, flat in appearance on the surface, but really in various planes, and intertwining, formed the usual basis. The whole is utterly conventional, as entirely the creation of the artist's mind, as the most conventional work of a Gothic architect."

A further sign of the influence of their religion in the architecture of the Moors, is found in their constant use of inscriptions, religious and poetic, written in the highly ornamental Arabic character. One of these, the most frequently introduced in the Alhambra, is shown in our Plate No. 1. It appears in the decoration of many of the halls, and superscribes the Gate of Judgment, the principal entrance of the palace. The legend attaching to this inscription is told by Washington Irving, in his work on the Alhambra, from which we quote as follows:

> "When, in 1248, the famous city of Seville surrendered to the Castilian monarch, Alhamar returned, sad and full of care, to his dominion. * * * As he approached Granada, on his return, he beheld arches of triumph, which had been erected in honor of his martial exploits. The people thronged forth to see him with impatient joy, for his benignant rule had won all hearts. Wherever he passed he was hailed with acclamations as 'El Ghalib' (The Conqueror). Alhamar gave a melancholy shake of the head on hearing the appellation. '*Wa la Ghalib illa Allah*' (There is no Conqueror but God), exclaimed he. From that time forward this exclamation became his motto and the motto of his descendants, and appears to this day emblazoned on his escutcheons in the halls of the Alhambra."

It was just after his return from the siege of Seville, Irving further informs us, that Alhamar began to build the Alhambra, "superintending the building in person, mingling frequently among the artists and workmen, and directing their labors." More than six hundred years have passed since then and, like the fresh splendors of his Spanish palace, Alhamar's name and memory have long since become faded and dim. But if that famous sentence of his, perpetuated in the friezes of the Alhambra, should now become familiar, as it easily may, in American decoration, there may yet await a revival for the fame of Alhamar; albeit in a country which was not known for centuries after his death. For it is one of the coincidences of history, that the Moors made their melancholy exit from Spain in the very year in which Columbus discovered America.

But every one of these patterns we have copied is replete with historic, legendary or artistic interest. The originals of several adorn the Hall of the Ambassadors, where the Moorish monarch received the representatives of foreign states. It is a room thirty feet square and sixty feet in height, with graceful Moorish arches supporting a ceiling literally hung with stalactite ornament, "Ill-fated the man that lost all this," said Charles V., as he looked out through one of the deeply recessed windows, from the wonders of art within to the equal wonders of the gardens without.

A few other of the portions of the palace, from which our patterns are taken, we mention as briefly as possible:

The "HALL OF THE ABENCERRAGES," so called from the gallant cavaliers of that illustrious line who were here perfidiously massacred. The exquisite honeycomb stalactite roof seems to float in air; and, as a critic tells us, "the slender pillar of the alcove explains how Samson pulled down the house of Dagon."

The "HALL OF THE TWO SISTERS," which Irving styles "The vague memorial of Moorish beauties who once graced this hall, which was evidently a part of the royal harem. The latticed 'jalousies,' in fact still remain, where the dark-eyed beauties of the harem might gaze, unseen, upon the zambra and other dances and entertainments of the hall below."

The "GATE OF JUDGMENT," through which the beneficent Alhamar sallied forth with his gallant army for the last time. Here, to this day, the guide will show the break in the stones where one of the warriors accidentally shattered his lance. What followed Irving relates:

> "The councillors of the king, alarmed by this circumstance, which was considered an evil omen, entreated him to return. Their supplications were in vain. The king persisted; and at noontide the omen, say the Moorish chronicles, was fatally fulfilled. Alhamar was suddenly struck with illness, and had nearly fallen from his horse. He was placed on a litter and borne backward to Granada. But his illness increased to such a degree, that they were obliged to pitch his tent in the Vega, * * * and in a few hours he died."

In its exterior aspect the Alhambra was purposely severe, simple, and even forbidding. A fortress-palace, it was intended, says the author of Murray's "Hand-Book for Spain," "to awe the city below, to keep out heat, and enemies, foreign and domestic, and to keep in women." All the more must the eye have been dazed by the scenes of Aladdin gorgeousness, to which the swinging of a single door gave admittance. Of the flowers and foliage, which frequently combine with geometric lines to form the "Arabesques" of the palace, Owen Jones, its greatest English expounder, writes:

> "These are not drawn decidedly from nature, but translated through the *loom;* for it would seem that the Arabs, in changing their wandering for a settled life, in striking the tent to plant it in a form more solid, had transferred the luxurious shawls and hangings of Cashmere, which had adorned their former dwellings, to their new, changing the tent-pole for a marble column, and the silken tissue for gilded plaster."

Mr. Jones might have added that the type of the column which so gracefully supports the ceilings of the Alhambra, is evidently the palm-tree, an object at once familiar and beloved to the wanderer of the desert.

But we leave the Alhambra designs without further comment, confident that they tell their own story. They are certainly the creation of a brilliant and remarkable people, and deserve, after so long neglect, to be brought to the light of a modern day.

They will be made in the "BIRGE VELOURS," with different colored Flocks and Bronzes, and also in colors without flock; and we are fain to believe that the contrast and harmony of color, as well as the grace of line, for which the Alhambra "Arabesques" are famous, are not unfaithfully shown in these reproductions.

THE "BIRGE VELOURS" we have greatly improved and developed since last season. The Velvet is in much higher relief; and we have many new colorings of light flock that we could not produce by our former process.

ELEVEN of the Colored Plates of this collection represent our patterns of Ceiling Decorations. They are designed and colored after the manner of modern painted ceilings, and can be easily applied by any intelligent paper hanger. Each border is made entire in one piece, so that no cutting or patching of different trimmers and borders is required.

WE HAVE A LARGE COLLECTION of patterns designed and colored expressly for the DECORATION OF CHURCHES and PUBLIC HALLS.

OUR PATTERNS can be obtained of most of the larger dealers in the United States, or we will be pleased to show samples on application.

M. H. BIRGE & SONS, BUFFALO, N. Y.

CONTENTS.

No. 1. INTERIOR decorated with Moorish patterns. Dado, No. 820, R. L. G.; Dado Rail, No. 107, R. C. G.; Screen No. 817, R. D. G.; Inscription Border, No. 105, R. L. S.; Frieze Border, No. 108, R. L. G.; Frieze Paper, No. 815, R. B. G.; Ceiling Paper, No. 821, R. B.

No. 2. CEILING Decoration. Extension, No. 114, C. G., 18 inches wide; Corner, No. 214, C. G.; Stile, No. 852, M. F.; Filling, No. 849, C. G.

No. 3. EXTENSION, No. 115, K. G., 18 inches wide; Corner, No. 215, K. G.; Filling, No. 859, D. G.; Stile of plain tint.

No. 4. EXTENSION, No. 113, M. G., 18 inches wide; Corner, No. 213, M. G.; Stile, No. 852, M. F.; Filling, No. 850, R. G.

No. 5. EXTENSION, No. 116, V. M. G., 9 inches wide; Corner, No. 216, V. M. G.; Stile, No. 854, E. G.; Filling, No. 860, P. G.

No. 6. EXTENSION, No. 117, A. G., 9 inches wide; Corner, No. 217, A. G.; Stile, No. 122, B. G.; Filling, No. 848, C. G.

No. 7. EXTENSION, No. 118, L. G. S., 6 inches wide; Corner, No. 218, L. G. S.; Stile, plain tint; Filling, No. 861.

No. 8. EXTENSION, No. 119, D. G., 6 inches wide; Corner, No. 219, D. G.; Stile, plain tint; Filling, No. 861, C. G.

PLATE 9.—HALL INTERIOR. Decorated with the "BIRGE VELOURS." The lower two-thirds of side wall papered with pattern No. 753, W. D. G. The upper third, and also all the side walls of the upper hall, with No. 746, V. C. G. Between two papers, and at the top of No. 753, a picture moulding, and above same a four and one-half-inch border, No. 101, W. F. G. The upper third finished next to the ceiling with a ten-inch border, No. 102, W. D. G. The ceiling decorated with pattern No. 713, F. G., ten-inch border, No. 103, B. G. S., and corner ornament No. 203, B. G. S.

PLATE 10.—RECEPTION ROOM INTERIOR. Side wall decorated with Frieze, thirty-six inches wide, No. 198, B., and with paper No. 755, D. G. Ceiling decorated with patterns as shown in plate No. 11.

No. 11. EXTENSION, No. 93, A. G., 18 inches wide; Corner, No. 192, A. G.; Side Ornament, No. 193, A. G.; Filling, No. 759, C. G.; Stile of plain tint.

No. 12. EXTENSION, No. 96, X. G., 9 inches wide; Corner, No. 196, X. G.; Filling, No. 760, W. G.; Stile of plain tint.

No. 13. EXTENSION, No. 99, D. G., 8 inches wide; Corner, No. 199, D. G.; Filling, No. 761, A. G.; Stile of plain tint.

No. 14. EXTENSION, No. 94, C. G., 18 inches wide; Corner, No. 193, C. G.; Side Ornament, No. 195, C. G.; Filling, No. 736, D. G.; Stile of plain tint.

PLATE 15. HALL IN CITY HOUSE. Decorated with Moorish patterns, BIRGE VELOURS. Dado, No. 821, R. B.; Dado border, No. 107, R. M. G.; Screen paper No. 813, R. D. G.; Inscription border, No. 105, R. K. G.; Upright border, No. 110, R. T. G.; Frieze Paper, 815, R. E. G.; Frieze border, 109, R. L. G.; Ceiling paper, 819, R. D.; Ceiling border, 108, R. M. G.

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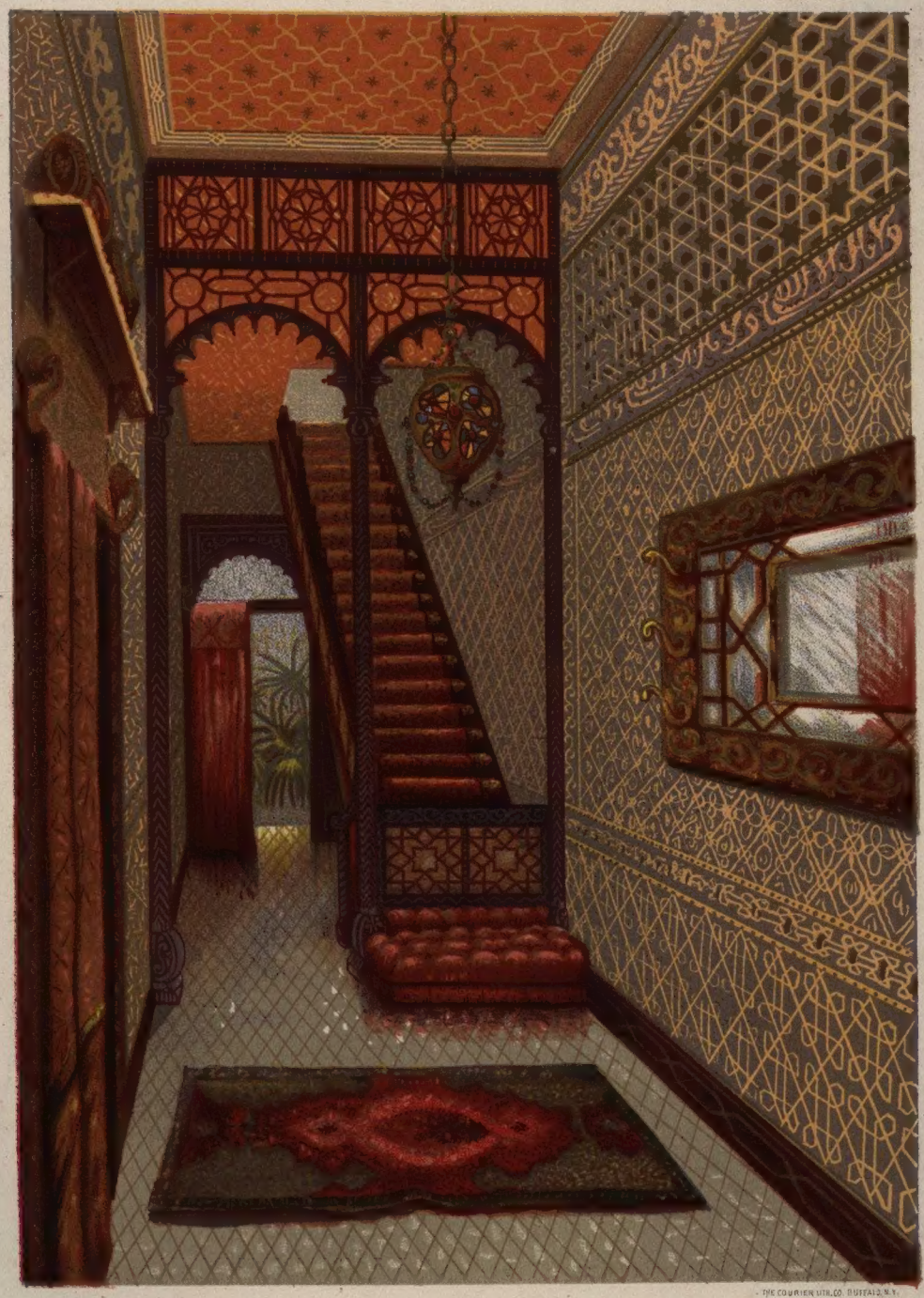

THE COURIER LITH. CO. BUFFALO, N.Y.

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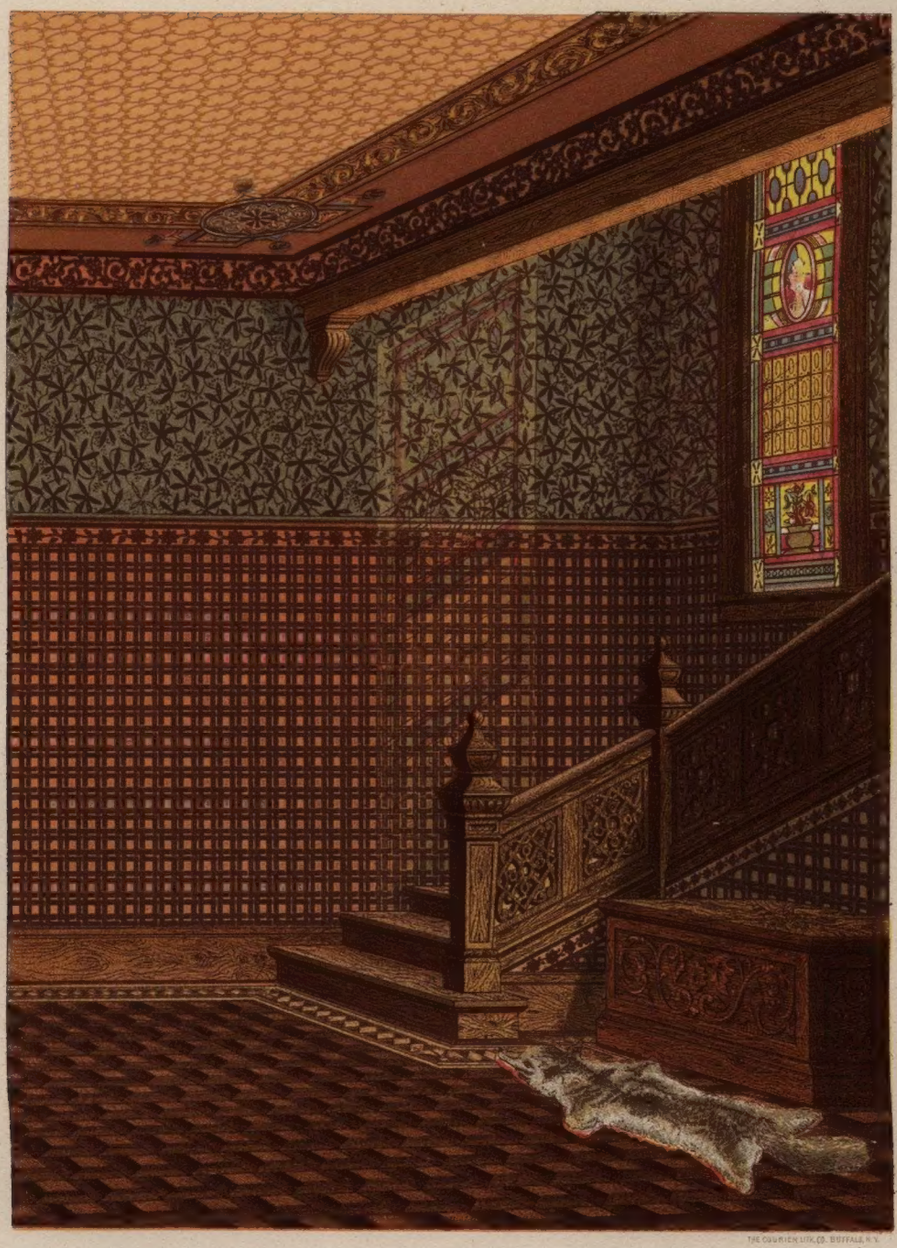

Staircase Hall

Decorated with the "Birge Velours."

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MORNING ROOM

Ceiling Decoration.

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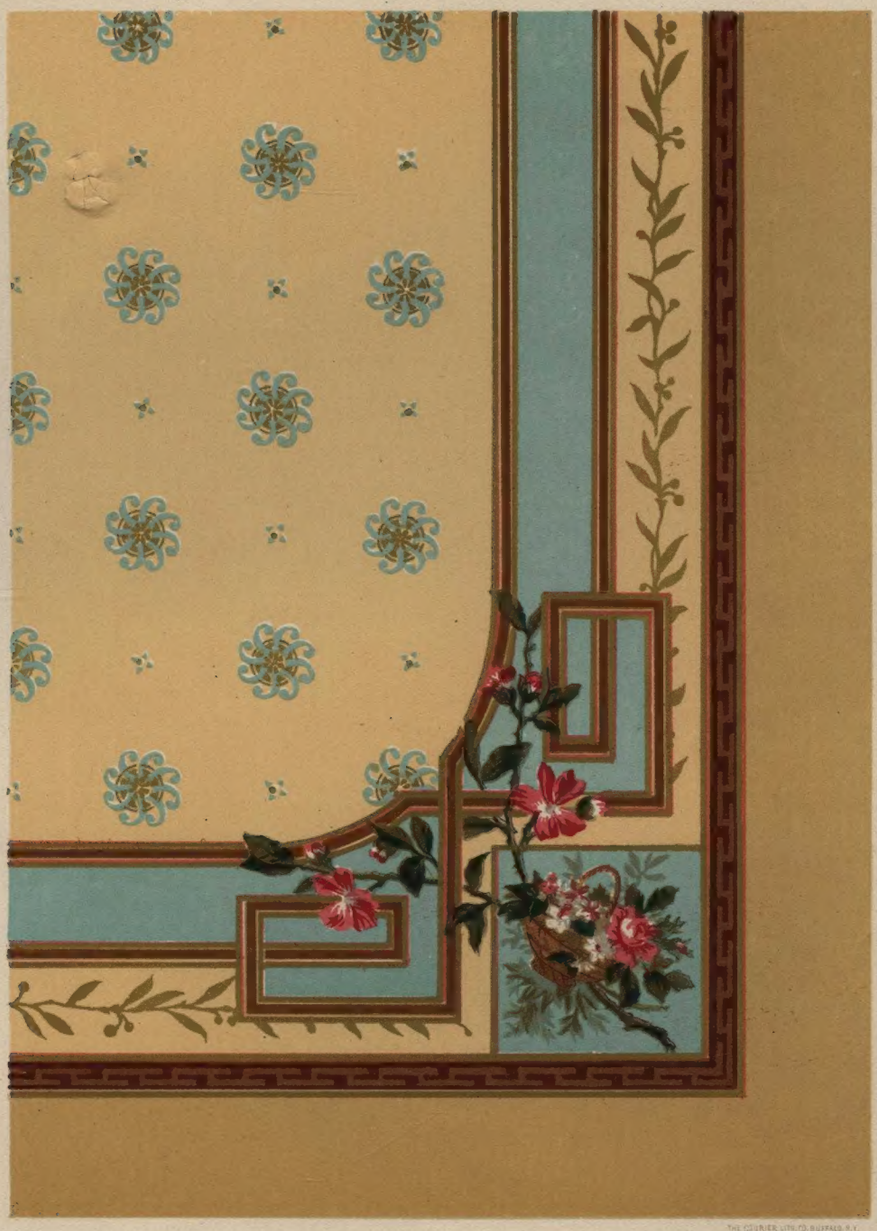
Ceiling Decoration.



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